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General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

10th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 26 September 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Román-Morey (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m.

Address by Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): Two years ago, during my first address before the Assembly as President of Colombia (see A/65/PV.15), I expressed my country's aspiration to become a member of the Security Council for the period 2011-2012.

We assumed the responsibility of participating in making decisions about critical situations that threaten world peace in a spirit of absolute independence and well aware of the enormous commitment required to work for international peace and security. It has been a particularly turbulent time, but one during which the aspirations of many peoples who had suffered long conflicts and armed confrontation have been furthered. Countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire are now making strides towards peacebuilding and the rule of law.

In Libya, a ruthless tyranny in place for more than 40 years was dismantled in a process in which the Security Council played a decisive role. My Government did not hesitate to condemn the violent repression of the civilian population justly clamouring for the exercise of their fundamental rights. That is why we joined the Council's decisions furthering a transition towards a democracy that, although still fragile, enjoys the support of the international community as it seeks to entrench itself. There are still violent groups that want to sabotage that process by terrorist methods. I take this opportunity to condemn in the strongest terms the despicable attack perpetrated against the United States consulate in Benghazi. Extremism, terrorism and disregard for human life cannot be allowed to persist.

Today, the Arab world is experiencing a fundamental political transformation, opening the way towards democracy. If the process is to last, it will require respect for people's rights and the creation of conditions conducive to sustainable economic development. We hope that participation by citizens, especially women, will continue to increase and foster democratic systems and opportunities for development and welfare.

With regard to the dire situation in Syria for more than a year and half, I must express our deep frustration with the inability of the international community to put

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an end to the tragedy that every day takes more and more Syrian lives. From this rostrum, we reiterate our call for an end to the attacks and for a political negotiation that will meet the legitimate aspirations of all sectors of Syrian society. Implementing Kofi Annan's six-point plan would greatly contribute to facilitating a Syrian-led political transition. We strongly support the new Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and wish him much success in his very complex and difficult task.

As a representative of a country that is currently a member of the Security Council, I would like to briefly turn to the matter of its reform, which has been under discussion for 20 years. Colombia believes that consensus should be our guide in developing a comprehensive approach that includes change in both the Council's composition and its working methods so as to promote more effectively the United Nations goals of peace, well-being and humanity.

In our hemisphere, one country that requires comprehensive peacebuilding is Haiti. We continue to work for Haiti. Its recovery will require our continuous support in strengthening its capacities, institutions and productivity so as to generate employment, reduce extreme poverty and promote the United Nations work for development in the country. I urge everyone to persevere in that cause.

A key event for the world this year was the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Inspired by the Millennium Development Goals model, Colombia led the proposal to establish the sustainable development goals, which was the most important outcome of the Rio+20 process. Today, the sustainable development goals promise to be a fundamental component of the planet's development agenda, and the Secretary-General himself has identified them as one of the five priorities of his legacy. We are therefore especially pleased that our Foreign Minister has been invited to be a member of the high-level panel on the post-2015 development agenda, which held its first meeting yesterday.

This year, the sixth Summit of the Americas gathered in Colombia, with 30 Heads of State and Government from the western hemisphere in attendance. It was a fruitful gathering, which for the first time we organized simultaneously with a business summit attended by the leaders of the premier companies of the Americas. We also held a social forum that brought together people from diverse social organizations on the continents.

The Summit of the Americas in Cartagena was characterized by frank and open dialogue about the most crucial issues for the region and the world. The Governments of the Americas agreed to undertake an analysis and discussion of the track record, effectiveness and future prospects of the so-called war on drugs, as well as possible alternatives to it. It is our duty to question with scientific objectivity whether we are doing the best we can or if there are better options to more effectively combating the scourge. To that end, we mandated the Organization of American States to begin an analysis and discussion, inviting other entities — the first of which would be, of course, the United Nations — to participate.

That is only a first step, but it is of great importance because it is the beginning of a discussion that the world has avoided for many years. We hope that it will ultimately yield concrete results. The debate about drugs that have caused so much harm throughout the world and to my country must be frank and, most certainly, global.

Similarly, in my statement before the General Assembly two years ago, I expressed my conviction that the dawning decade should be the decade of Latin America and the Caribbean — a decade that would consolidate that region of the world as a region of peace, progress and solutions for the rest of the planet. Today, we are pleased to note that our region is indeed experiencing a favourable moment with solid economies, functional democracies and no current conflict among the nations of which it is formed.

Regional coordination mechanisms of relatively recent establishment, such as the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, are evidence of the resolve of our countries and peoples to cooperate. I would like to highlight the enormous potential of the Pacific Alliance that was formalized this year among Mexico, Peru, Colombia and Chile. The Alliance is open to the participation of other States with which we seek to strengthen not only trade but also political and human ties, as well as to the nations of the immense Pacific basin.

I cannot conclude without referring to the special moment that our country is currently experiencing. Against the backdrop of international turbulence, we

have been successful in maintaining a healthy economy that has generated over 2 million new jobs over the course of two years, attesting to the major progress we have made in reducing poverty. We have put in place initiatives of great social impact, such as a law for victims, which is the only legislation in the world that seeks to return lands to displaced peasants and to compensate the victims of a conflict that remains ongoing; or major hydrocarbon and mining royalties reform to more fairly distribute the revenues generated by such activities, and thereby promote more effective social development.

Nevertheless, our progress, which has been remarkable, has been curtailed by an absurd conflict that has now lasted half a century. Today, Colombia is suffering through the most prolonged internal armed conflict in its hemisphere, indeed perhaps one of the longest-lasting in the world — an ever-more anachronistic and inexplicable conflict. Above all, it is inexplicable in the light of the development of our democracy and of our social progress.

Aware of that, and without neglecting the protection and security of the Colombian people and without ceding an inch in the fight against terrorism and crime, my Government is resolved to move forward prudently, seriously and firmly, and without repeating the mistakes of the past, by entering into conversations with the guerrilla forces in order to achieve an end to the armed conflict.

After two years of exploratory contacts, we have announced to the country and to the world that a phase of talks will be initiated on a short and concrete agenda, which we hope will allow us to achieve the desired outcome. The talks will begin in Oslo during the first half of October and will continue in Havana, thanks to the goodwill of the Governments of Norway and Cuba, which will serve as guarantors. We will also have the backing of the Government of Venezuela, to which we are grateful for its valuable support, and of the Government of Chile, which will be working with us during the second phase.

Today, before the General Assembly, I wish to thank the international community for the support it has expressed at outset of the talks and for its willingness to cooperate and help in any way that is necessary. We embark upon the talks with moderate optimism and in the absolute conviction that it is an opportunity that we cannot squander to achieve a peace that is good not only for Colombia but for the entire region.

With regard to my statement today, a few days ago I asked the Colombian people through social media what message they wanted me to bring here to the General Assembly. Among the many messages I received, I want to share one from my compatriot Henry Rodríguez Chacón: "An entire generation wants to wake up one day to the news of a peace agreement." That is the most heartfelt wish of the Colombian people.

Aware that the process must have brief deadlines and precise terms if it is to be successful, I trust that I will be able to deliver to the Assembly next year a positive outcome of the effort, which we undertake enthusiastically with a view to ending our 50-year conflict.

We do not want to talk just about peace; we want to build conditions for peace. That is what we are doing on a daily basis with the actions of our Government and now with the talks that we are initiating. Today, with great hope, we present the world with this new special moment for my country, Colombia.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati: It is an immense pleasure for me to join other Heads of State and Government at this sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I should like to begin by congratulating the President upon his election to steer the work of the Assembly at this

session. His experience and abilities are well known and respected. We have full confidence that he will take the Organization to greater heights. The Kingdom of eSwatini is ready to give him all the support that he deserves in carrying out this mammoth task.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report on the work of the Organization (A/67/1). We have seen the staff of the United Nations working very hard, sometimes in very difficult and hostile environments, dedicating their service to helping those who require our assistance and support. The Kingdom of eSwatini commends the Secretary-General and his dedicated team for working tirelessly to ensure the realization of all aspirations of the Organization.

As we gather here, we must always remember that the role of the United Nations is to keep peace throughout the world, to develop and to help nations to work together in resolving challenges such as hunger, unemployment, conflicts, disease and illiteracy, among others. The United Nations also aims to be the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations to achieve our aspirations.

We are meeting here at a time when the whole world is facing numerous challenges, such as the economic and financial crisis. The Kingdom of eSwatini believes that the United Nations is the appropriate forum to deliberate on these challenges in order to come up with united global solutions. As part of the global community, the Kingdom of eSwatini has not been spared from this economic predicament. Our social development programmes that enhance the delivery of the Millennium Development Goals and national projects, such as job creation and poverty alleviation strategies, have been adversely affected by the prevailing situation. The gains we have made in the fight against HIV and AIDS through the rollout of antiretroviral treatments remain threatened by the uncertainty around the financial sustainability of the programme.

We wish to acknowledge the support we continue to receive from the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in mitigating all diseases. The Fund has gone a long way in injecting resources into our national programme of promoting health as a key national priority. The need to work together to overcome these challenges could not have been more essential.

In our efforts to address global economic challenges, we should be conscious of the social implications of some of the proposed solutions. Our strategies should not create more hardship, but rather find answers that mitigate the difficulties we face. I am confident that, with our wealth of different experiences, we stand to benefit from valuable strategies, especially from those States that have not been seriously affected by the financial crisis. We urge those countries to share their experiences for the benefit of all Member States. The Kingdom of eSwatini calls on the United Nations to consider making these challenges among its top priorities during this session.

The Kingdom of eSwatini last month converged on Sibaya for dialogue on social, economic and political issues with a view to crafting solutions and agreeing on a way forward that would best improve our livelihoods. Sibaya is a place where every citizen is free to participate irrespective of gender, creed, religion or affiliation, among other things. We believe in the full participation of all citizens at the grass-roots level in the decision-making process. This forum is an institution where key national pronouncements are made and national sustainable development strategies conceived. Our national Constitution and National Development Strategy are outputs of this structure. This practice has been passed on from generation to generation, and has continued to serve us well, since it allows the people to contribute to their own welfare.

Like many other States Member of the Organization, the Kingdom of eSwatini has been working hard towards the ratification of United Nations conventions, as well as of continental and regional protocols. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Sibaya forum provided the whole nation with an opportunity to discuss those conventions and protocols, which have since been ratified by Parliament and deposited with the Secretary-General. We are pleased that we can now be counted among the countries that have successfully ratified United Nations conventions and protocols.

The world we live in has become a complicated place with the advent of modern technology. We remain faced with the challenge of how best to take advantage of this technology, such as social media, to promote peace and stability. If there is anything we need to do, it is to promote peace in the world. It is true, and we fully agree with the assertion that there is no need to promote violence of any kind, be it the killing of diplomats, the forced removal of Governments, or any other form. In

this world, we must all live together in peace, whether as Muslims, Christians or any other traditional believers. We must learn to respect each other irrespective of race, creed or religious affiliation. If we practiced those principles, the world would be altogether a different and better place. As human beings, we must turn the page, forget the past and live together for the benefit of generations to come.

On the African continent, we are encouraged by the concerted efforts of our fellow brothers and sisters who are committed to resolving their differences in a peaceful manner. We encourage speedy resolutions in areas where pockets of conflict remain, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and some North African countries, to mention but a few.

The Assembly knows that Somalia has also been without a stable Government for a long time, and we hope that new developments will bring about lasting peace. In that vein, the Kingdom of eSwatini welcomes the recent development that has taken place in Somalia. We hope that the election of the President will bring the desired stability.

We extend the call for peace beyond Africa, to the Middle East, where we continue to witness conflict. The war in Syria has claimed the lives of too many citizens and must come to an end. We appeal to the people of Syria to discourage the use of force in resolving their differences. We encourage the use of dialogue in cases where they do not see eye to eye. We implore the Syrian Government and the other stakeholders to sit down in dialogue in order to find a lasting solution to the current impasse. The barrel of the gun will bring nothing but misery.

The United Nations and the League of Arab States have sent a Joint Special Representative to work with the people of Syria. We hope that all stakeholders will make good use of the Joint Special Representative towards finding a peaceful and lasting solution to their differences. The Kingdom of eSwatini urges States Members of the United Nations to work together in supporting all efforts aimed at helping the people of Syria to resolve the conflict.

We also note that the Israel-Palestine conflict remains unresolved. A peaceful settlement of the issue is deeply desired and urgently necessary. Our position is unambiguous. The most viable solution is to have the two States of Israel and Palestine coexisting side by side in peace and harmony.

We must commend the recent positive developments with regard to relations between the Republic of China on Taiwan and mainland China, which are steadily improving. Indeed, it is very encouraging as it demonstrates that the tensions between the two countries have subsided. We hope that one day they will be able to resolve all of their differences and live happily with each other. We are witnessing increasing trade, as well as flights, between the two countries. Recently, it was also interesting to see mainland China host an African summit, to which the countries that are friends of Taiwan were also invited.

As an African country, we would like to thank mainland China for its continued support to African countries. We have no doubt that the potential of the two peoples working together side by side will make a significant difference in the world. We hope that the new developments will pave the way for Taiwan to participate fully in all United Nations entities, because the people of Taiwan desire to become part of the global community.

Peace will continue to elude us until we properly address the issue of weapons of mass destruction. It is clear that those weapons are not necessary to humankind. Their mere presence is a recipe for conflict as each country seeks to gain power over others. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, adopted by many Member States, must be enforced to ensure the complete elimination of these weapons.

We have not seen any tangible proof of compliance with the internationally agreed time frames, which is a cause for serious concern requiring urgent attention. The mere existence of those weapons creates unnecessary tension that could result in a very hostile world environment. We implore those countries endowed with uranium resources to use them for other essential economic development needs, such as power generation.

The Kingdom of eSwatini recognizes the important role that the Security Council plays in the pursuit of international peace and security. The Charter of the United Nations clearly stipulates an international order that ensures the rule of law. We call upon the General Assembly at this session to deliberate on Security Council reform, as not all regions are well represented. We wish to reiterate the African position on the Security Council, claiming two seats in the permanent category and five seats in the non-permanent category. The full representation of all regions in the Council will

ensure that we all own the decisions of that important security organ. We should all be given equal treatment. No region or country should impose its influence over others. We wish to see finality in that urgent matter, since it has dragged on for a very long time now.

The high-level meeting on sustainable energy for all, which was held alongside this session, gave Heads of State and Government a forum to deliberate on issues that promote the protection of our environment. That meeting provided us with an opportunity to revisit the commitments made towards sustainable energy for all.

The destruction of the environment has had devastating effects on many of our countries. The United Nations must expedite the processes towards protecting the environment by enforcing the use of environmentally friendly technologies and practices by Member States. We call upon the developed countries to honour their commitments made prior to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro.

Finally, allow me to say that as we meet during this session, let us adopt resolutions that will provide lasting solutions to the challenges faced by humankind the world over. We wish the United Nations every success as it pursues its objective of creating a peaceful environment and coexistence among all the nations of the world. Let honesty, peace, stability and tolerance prevail across the globe.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

President Pérez Molina (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to greet Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his stewardship during the previous session.

I have the honour to represent Guatemala for the first time before this highest organ of the United Nations. Guatemala, and my Government in particular, will always support any initiative that furthers the noble objectives and principles of the United Nations, summarized in the words "peace", "development" and "human rights".

My country is committed to the peaceful settlement of conflicts, which is the central theme of our debate. In that spirit, in late 2008 we agreed to sign a special agreement with our neighbour, Belize, seeking a resolution of a long-standing territorial dispute through the International Court of Justice. Our Congress unanimously approved the agreement, and on October 6, 2013, simultaneous plebiscites will be held in both countries to democratically ratify our commitment to resorting to the International Court of Justice.

Furthermore, we Guatemalans lived through an armed conflict that lasted 36 years. I was a soldier who participated in that conflict. And because I know war, I highly value dialogue. That is why in 1996 I was one of the signatories of the peace accords in my country. That motivates me to reaffirm my support for the President's wise decision to convene this session to discuss the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

My Government has set three overarching objectives in order to advance firmly and sustainably towards a Guatemala that fully enjoys the benefits of peace. First, we have proposed the Hambre Zero initiative, which seeks to reduce the chronic malnutrition that affects over 40 per cent of our children below five years of age. That reduction will be sustainable only if we are able to better develop our rural areas in order to permanently reduce the poverty of families living off the land, particularly indigenous families.

Secondly, my Government is promoting a pact for security, justice and peace, which seeks to reduce the social violence that afflicts our country. In taking office, I found a country with high levels of violence; as a result, reducing those levels has become a priority

of my Government. We are certain that we can attain progress in that area, since the indicators over the past nine months alone already show a notable decrease of 13 per cent in the number of homicides compared to the same period last year. I can therefore state that, without being satisfied with those indices, we are nonetheless moving in the right direction in fulfilling our promise of reducing the levels of violence and increasing security in Guatemala in an environment of full respect for human rights. In this endeavour, we work closely with neighbouring countries, and especially with our Central American brothers.

Thirdly, we are campaigning on the economic front through the Fiscal and Competitiveness Pact. Fiscal affairs have been one of the weaknesses of our institutional arrangement, and for this reason, during the very first days of my Government we successfully promoted a fiscal reform, approved by Congress, that increased our fiscal receipts by 15 per cent, allowing us to maintain a stable macroeconomic environment by reducing the fiscal deficit without having to reduce public expenditures. At the same time, fiscal stability is allowing us to stimulate private investments that generate employment opportunities; that is, dependable jobs, as demanded by our citizens.

Unfortunately, our efforts in relation to the three challenges previously mentioned — lowering chronic malnutrition among children, reducing violence, and promoting employment — are nullified in part by the scourge of drug trafficking. At least 40 per cent of the homicides in our country are linked to the illicit drug traffic, and my Government is obligated to allocate scarce fiscal resources to combat transnational gangs that operate between the producing countries in the South and the consuming countries in the North. Moreover, my country has gradually been transformed into a producer and a consumer of drugs, thereby compounding an already difficult situation.

The existing framework, born out of the international conventions adopted during the past five decades and currently in force, has not achieved the desired results. The consumption markets expand instead of decreasing; the number of producer countries and the type of drugs available tend to multiply; and the routes chosen for marketing and trafficking are trending towards diversification. The drug problem is growing in size and complexity. It involves an increasing number of countries and persons. Clearly, it is a transnational phenomenon, and it is for that reason that I raise it in this universal forum.

It seems that the basic premise of our war against drugs has serious shortcomings since, unfortunately, it has not been possible to eradicate drug consumption. I believe that the time has come to accept this fact and to adapt our fight against the scourge in such a way as to take into account the new realities.

Our youth, the group most affected by drug consumption, demands more effective responses from us. Let us realize that the problem is more a public health issue than a matter for criminal justice and deal with it accordingly. We must offer treatment, prevention, social protection, economic opportunities and development for the communities involved in the drug market. Let us not fill our jails with thousands of young people, who would have a different kind of life if we were to approach the problem in a different way. I invite the Member States assembled here to jointly seek avenues that will enable us to offer our young people a more promising future, improving their opportunities for a better life and at the same time reducing violence and poverty.

Fifty years provides sufficient time for us to evaluate results, to gauge what we have achieved and to conclude why we do not have the results we had hoped for. In that regard, I also call on Member States to review the international regulations that currently govern our global policies regarding drugs. The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 must be evaluated on the basis of its results and brought up to date to allow us to achieve the desired outcomes. That is a serious challenge that must be addressed in all earnestness so that we can have a respectful and frank multilateral dialogue, informed by clear scientific evidence regarding the best strategies available to ensure that our young people are protected from the scourge of drugs.

In that regard, last April the Heads of State and Government of the Western Hemisphere met for the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena de Indias. Our host, Mr. Santos Calderón, President of Colombia, invited us to discuss new avenues to combat drug trafficking. The agreement reached was that we should undertake studies to assess new alternatives, which we

would discuss next year, in June, at a meeting of the Organization of American States in Guatemala. That is a step in the right direction and one that we believe should be emulated at the global level.

In the same spirit, Guatemala would like to propose the establishment of a group of countries that are well disposed to reforming global policies on drugs. The group would bring together Governments that are interested in promoting in appropriate international forums an objective and rigorous assessment of prevailing policies and inconsidering new, creative and innovative alternatives. We must seek such new avenues responsibly and tenaciously, and I am sure that with the cooperation of all producing, consuming and transit countries, we will succeed.

Allow me to stress that it is not a matter of abandoning the fight against the scourge of drugs. Rather, it is a matter of arming ourselves better and responding with greater effectiveness and clarity, because our children and grandchildren deserve a more integrated and effective response from the international community.

I would like to conclude my thoughts by reaffirming that Guatemala will not renege on any international commitments to which it is party. We have no desire for unilateral action, which would only sow chaos and conflict when the response should be a global one. We will wait patiently to change our policies in Guatemala until the international community moves forward and arrives at a new consensus. At the same time, however, I commit my leadership to moving forward on evaluating the global policy on drugs, so as to make it more effective and based on current international standards that reflect the challenges and realities of the twenty-first century.

Before concluding, I would like to briefly raise three points that I believe to be important to this meeting of the General Assembly. First, as a demonstration of our commitment to defending and promoting human rights on all fronts, on 14 January I said that Guatemala would seek to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and thus become a party to the Statute. I am pleased to report that, on 2 April, we deposited our instrument of ratification.

Secondly, in that same speech, I indicated that we would make it a priority of our foreign policy to contribute to the ideals of democracy, justice and peace, within a framework of absolute respect for international law. In that regard, I indicated that Guatemala would fulfil its duties on the Security Council responsibly and in a constructive spirit. I believe that so far we have kept that promise, and we are pleased that in six days Guatemala will assume the presidency of the Council for the month of October, and we will continue to act responsibly.

Thirdly, regarding the events of recent weeks, we reject all acts that defame religions. At the same time, we condemn violence in any form, including assaults on diplomatic missions. Such expressions of intolerance offend us all.

Finally, I would like to recall that, on 21 December, Guatemala will celebrate the beginning of a new era according to the Mayan calendar. That era, 13 Baktun, marks the start of a very positive new age that will enable and invite us to renew physical and spiritual energies in an atmosphere of peace, cooperation and dialogue. All heads of State and Government are invited to join us in Tikal National Park to share in the dawn of this new era. The Mayans of yesterday and today, and all Guatemalans, await them with open arms.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajoelina (*spoke in French*): As President of the Transition of Madagascar, it is a great honour for me to participate in the general debate of the United Nations for the second time. The theme of

the sixty-seventh session is akin to a call for unity, for shared contemplation and for generally revisiting existential questions and human values in the face of situations around the world where peace is extremely precarious.

The last few years have indeed been marked by differences of opinion, political disputes and conflicts of interest. The world today faces new challenges to stability and the maintenance of peace. Various efforts and initiatives have been undertaken to deal with conflicts that are not homogeneous and disputes that do not always play out along the same lines. People's interests differ and their approaches are not all equal.

Today the list of the forms that global conflicts take leads us to an obvious reality: geostrategic variations conform to no one rule, and they are in perpetual flux. The wise words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his statement at the opening of the sixteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement seem particularly revealing in that context. Did he not stress that among the challenges that must be met, there are all too many political disputes between member States of the Non-Aligned Movement itself? Did he not urge the protagonists in the Syrian crisis to immediately institute a ceasefire and a halt to the violence? And yet we can only deplore the fact that his call produced no result. Scores of innocent people are still dying every day, and over recent months they now number in the thousands. We firmly condemn this loss of human life. The Earth continues to run with the blood of innocents, spilled violently not only in Syria but in other parts of the world as well.

Given this state of affairs, despite the complexity of the challenges those conflicts present, the Secretary-General has not stood idle. We can only commend his determination to strive tirelessly to seek a negotiated settlement. States and other bodies must join forces to maintain peace, stability and security in the world. We cannot be passive witnesses to current or future disasters. The Republic of Madagascar sets particular store by the relevance and importance of the principles set forth in the United Nations Charter, as a source of inspiration as well as a pillar of support for the interdependence of nations and peoples. That being the case, human rights, the law of States, the rule of law and the other international regulatory tools place before leaders their responsibilities.

The League of Nations defined the rule of law as a principle of governance based on the submission of all individuals and institutions, including the State, to the adopted and published laws, without distinction as to social or economic status; on the equality of everyone before an independent, impartial justice system; and on the harmonization of national laws with international human rights standards. No one should be above the law, and the culture of impunity must be banished.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

National conflicts today transcend borders and are becoming international problems. More than ever, the role of diplomacy and international negotiations face difficulties. The consequences of disputes play out in a number of ways, including with problems of impunity, instability in the Arab and Muslim world, the case of Somali piracy, illegal immigrations, persons displaced by war, problems regarding the Rom issue, religious confrontations, management of land and sea borders, and food insecurity. It is undeniable that much remains to be done to save human lives, because still civilian populations remain the primary victims of conflicts and disputes throughout the world.

The world is in upheaval, and many countries are in a situation of transition. Their peoples demand change and hope for sustainable development. Those countries need to be supported and encouraged, not sanctioned. In that context, allow me to highlight the case of my own country, Madagascar.

Madagascar is a country emerging from crisis, thanks to the involvement of the bodies of the Southern African Development Community and the support of the African Union, the Indian Ocean Commission and the International Organization of la Francophonie. A road map was signed and adopted by the Malagasy political parties in September 2011. Thus, several significant steps have been taken. The Malagasy parties have honoured their commitments. All the transitional institutions have been set up, including a national unity Government and the transitional Parliament. The road map, which we can call a political agreement, has allowed us to launch the electoral process.

Madagascar needs to take its destiny into its own hands, to write its own history, and to end the cycle of political instability through the holding of credible and transparent elections, guaranteed by the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission of the Transition. Above all, recently, in concert with United Nations experts, the electoral timetable for

Madagascar was officially announced, including the holding of presidential elections scheduled for 8 May 2013. Thus I launch a solemn appeal to all international partners, all Member States and friends of Madagascar to support us and encourage us in that approach, which is the only and most democratic path forward.

Profoundly committed to the values of solidarity, tolerance and peace, Madagascar is now searching for swift development and a better future. During the three and a half years of transition and despite all attempts at destabilization, we have worked tirelessly every day to honour our commitments and ensure the protection of our countrymen, all the while addressing social problems. In spite of challenging times, and despite the suspension of international aid and subsidies, which once accounted for 60 per cent of the State budget, we have been able to keep the administration functioning normally and have honoured all our commitments and debts.

Madagascar is indeed one of the least developed countries. Nevertheless, it is one of the least indebted countries in the world since its debt amounts to only 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), compared to other countries whose debt rate can reach up to 238 per cent of GDP. Therefore, it is possible to develop our country and create our wealth through our own resources. That is the challenge that we are meeting.

Now it is high time to embark on in-depth reform to create an effective system that meets the highest expectations of our respective populations — not forgetting, obviously, the need to double or even triple our commitments to fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development. Here today, I launch an appeal for international solidarity to channel the transition towards the building of a more promising future — but without stifling us.

The Malagasy people need their full and entire independence, but above all they must be able to hold transparent and therefore democratic elections. I know that everyone here is sincerely willing to lend us support. So allow me to give the Assembly the solution. The best way to help us is to trust us, honour the commitments made and let us shoulder our own responsibilities. In the name of universal values and principles, anyone meeting the conditions of eligibility dictated by law is fully entitled to exercise that liberty. That is a fundamental principle, and all States must respect it. The Malagasy people alone — not other countries or external pressure — have the sovereign right to decide who should guide their destiny. The Malagasy people alone will choose the man or woman who will lead Madagascar.

If confidence is shown in the Malagasy people, they will be grateful. The concepts of non-interference and respect for the sovereignty of each country establish mutual trust, which is a basic rule for all international negotiations. They are among the peaceful means needed to build lasting peace. Efforts must be made to put an end to the inequalities in how countries in political crisis are treated. The realities on the ground and popular aspirations must be acknowledged in order to avoid making the wrong decision.

Despite our disagreements and our differences on how to achieve a peaceful settlement of our conflicts, we the States Members of the United Nations are unanimous in our firm desire for peace. The United Nations system cannot just be the police of the world; it also needs to be a source of hope and of values. Our societies need to exist and find their way through their own values, because it is social and economic ills, injustice, the lack of protection for vulnerable populations and intolerance for minorities that often cause States to collapse.

As far as its modest means allow, the Republic of Madagascar is determined to contribute to achieving our shared goals. The peace accord is fragile and needs to develop. To quote Martin Luther King, Jr., "All progress is precarious, and the solution of one problem brings us face to face with another problem". It is our duty and responsibility to provide a better future for the generations to come. Global stability requires tolerance, assistance, the creation and equitable sharing of wealth, and poverty reduction through sustainable development and reconciliation. The principles of adjustment or settlement of international disputes by peaceful means requires a return to our values, gender balance and equality, and, above all, democratic alternation. God bless our nation!

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Timofti (*spoke in Moldovan; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session and to wish him every success in that highly honourable and important role. I am convinced that his rich experience will contribute to the achievement of significant results in our work together. I convey my appreciation as well to his predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for the exemplary manner in which he led the sixty-sixth session. I also wish to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his ongoing efforts to revitalize the global role of the United Nations and to bring reforms to the Organization.

It is a great honour for me to speak from this rostrum for the first time on behalf of the people of the Republic of Moldova. Twenty-one years ago, my country broke away from the Soviet empire, and today it is undergoing a process of democratic transformation, with membership in the European Union as its ultimate goal. After a period of several years marked by political turmoil, my country now enjoys political stability, which allows it to develop and modernize. We have firmly defined European integration as our objective and have revived the economic and social reforms. Our priorities are the establishment of the rule of law and comprehensive judicial reform, with an emphasis on fighting corruption, modernization of the economy and reintegration of the country.

The support and assistance provided by our European partners from Brussels and United Nations Member States are extremely important for us and assure us that we are on the right path. Two decades ago, on the very day the Republic of Moldova joined the United Nations, the peace in my country was shaken. The armed conflict in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova lasted for five months and caused the loss of many lives. It was a tragic period that, while now past, continues to pose a serious challenge in the present. Since the end of the hostilities, Moldova has firmly embarked on the road towards a peaceful settlement of that conflict. Twenty years of negotiations have strengthened our belief that that is the only viable path to follow in order to reach a political settlement.

It is obvious that the perpetuation of the conflict does not offer any real benefit to the majority of the people on either bank of the Nistru river. It undermines our national security and territorial integrity, hampers economic development and divides our society. Moreover, the conflict keeps the population of the Transnistrian region in isolation, incites human rights violations and generates economic stagnation on the left bank of the Nistru. The current political and economic trends show that preserving the status quo is not a viable scenario anymore. All of our international partners share the view that there is no alternative to a reunified Moldova. Our message in that regard is firm – 20 years are enough to overcome the mistrust of the past and it is time to start building a shared future.

The key elements in the approach of the Moldovan authorities to resolving the conflict are also clear. Our ultimate goal is to reintegrate the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders as a functional State with a clear European perspective. The Transnistrian region should be granted a special status within Moldova, which will provide the region with a comfortable level of self-governance. Defining the special status is the core task of the political negotiations in the "5+2" format. That negotiation process should lead to a reasonable compromise based on the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

In parallel, we will continue to implement confidence-building measures aimed at bringing communities from both banks of the Nistru River closer to each other. By promoting business links, ensuring freedom of movement, protecting human rights, improving security and combating criminality, we will prepare a better ground for a political solution. Transformation of the existing military peacekeeping mechanism into an international civilian mission aimed at building confidence rather than separating the sides has also become an imperative.

Our international partners provide an essential contribution to bringing that conflict to an end. Growing assistance from the European Union is an encouraging example in that regard. The negotiation process now needs a strong stimulus, and we believe that our international partners can demonstrate the necessary political will to that end. We call on the 5+2 format negotiators, namely, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the European Union and the United States of America, to pool their efforts and work together towards the final resolution of the Transnistrian conflict and reintegration of the Republic of Moldova.

It is also important to reiterate that Russian forces are still present on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, without the consent of the host country and in breach of the Moldovan Constitution and international commitments, and they should be finally withdrawn.

The universal character of the United Nations and its unique role in managing international relations are widely recognized. There is no alternative to this Organization. Yet, globalization and the global financial crisis have demonstrated the need to reform the Organization in order to ensure the progressive and sustainable strengthening of the United Nations. I am referring in particular to Security Council reform, to which a compromise solution should be found. We believe that any proposal for its reform should take into account the legitimate aspirations of all regional groups, including granting an additional non-permanent seat to the Eastern European States.

In its capacity as a member of the Human Rights Council, the Committee on Conferences, the Policy and Programme Coordination Committee, the Committee on Information, the Commission for Population and Development and other United Nations elective bodies, the Republic of Moldova will continue to support efforts towards the comprehensive reform of the United Nations system and its main bodies and organs, including the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council aimed at enhancing the efficiency, transparency, accountability and representativeness of the system.

The relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations is of paramount importance for the maintenance of international peace and security. In many instances, all those organizations have unique and complementary capacities that, when properly coordinated, can contribute decisively to the prevention and management of conflicts, including protracted ones. From that point of view, during this session we will strongly support the consideration by the General Assembly of the issue of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and other organizations.

In the same context, considering the distinct objective devoted to democracy and economic development, the increased potential and role in economic development and regional integration, as well as the strong determination of the countries of the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova (GUAM) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development to actively contribute to international security, stability and peace, the delegations of its member States have decided to advance for consideration of the General Assembly during its current session a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and GUAM.

At this stage, the process of development and integration of our States is still burdened by some outstanding problems, including unresolved conflicts in the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. We reaffirm our unswerving commitment to finding peaceful solutions to those conflicts on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our countries.

Promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels is at the heart of the United Nations mission and is fundamental to achieving durable peace, supporting openness in Government, the effective protection of human rights and sustained economic growth and development. We emphasize the importance of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (A/67/PV.3), held on 24 September, and will continue to support efforts in that direction during the sixty-seventh session. In our view, strengthening the rule of law will help to maintain peace, promote development and enhance cooperation, and is therefore conducive to the achievement of the goal of building a harmonious world.

The non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, disarmament and the efficient control of armaments remain vital topics on the international cooperation agenda, which need the common understanding, political will and engaged efforts of all States and international organizations. The Republic of

Moldova fully supports the international community in exerting continuous control of and applying the necessary preventive measures against unlawful attempts to develop weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, which pose a real threat to international security and are often used to challenge the existing world order.

The Republic of Moldova established significant objectives and is undertaking tangible steps in accomplishing its priorities in the field of arms control. In cooperation with our partners, the Government of the Republic of Moldova is in the process of adjusting to the best international standards, adopting dual-use goods export control legislation, improving small arms and light weapons management for civilians and the military, ensuring proper border management, and actively cooperating at the regional and international levels.

Military conflicts in different regions of the planet and the global economic crises have brought human rights issues once again to our attention. The principles of international law and human rights standards can be promoted only by joint efforts and decisions. Acts of aggression, including attacks against the personnel and integrity of diplomatic facilities, represent a violation of international norms and deserve our firm condemnation. The relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council, have sufficient instruments to take action on behalf of States in order to prevent human rights violations, conduct country evaluations and provide tailored solutions.

As a member of the Human Rights Council for the term of 2010 to 2013 and, as Vice-Chair of the Third Committee at its previous session, the Republic of Moldova continuously pledges to keep an open mind in furthering the cause of promoting and protecting human rights worldwide.

The world economic crisis is an incentive for putting into practice the idea of sustainable development, which could simultaneously provide solutions for maintaining the pace of economic growth and prevent climate change. We support the renewal of the global commitment made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the agreement on establishing the sustainable development goals (see resolution 66/288, annex). We believe that promoting a green economy model will help enterprises to reconfigure in order to streamline natural, human and economic investments.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that the Republic of Moldova is a strong supporter of the United Nations role in global governance and the management of international crises. We believe in the potential and capacities of the United Nations to find adequate responses and take concrete actions aimed at resolving the ever-increasing global challenges. The Republic of Moldova is definitely contributing to that activity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Moldova for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: It is an honour once again to address the United Nations. This year I would like to focus on responsibility. The recent years of economic and financial turbulence have demonstrated a strong correlation between economic prudence and responsibility in fiscal matters. We have realized, I hope, that sustainability is not a term we apply only to development, but concerns all of us. Responsibility and sustainability apply to the three broad topics I shall address today: human rights, good governance and development. But before doing so, I would like to speak about diplomacy.

The purpose of diplomacy is to prevent war. When diplomats are attacked we are all less secure. We know what we are talking about — we too have had our diplomats attacked, mercifully without the horrific consequences that occured in Benghazi. Therefore, the recent assaults in many parts of the world on diplomats, embassies and consular premises

are deplorable. Regardless of their motivations, such acts are unjustifiable and must be universally and unequivocably condemned. All countries must fulfil their international legal obligation to protect diplomatic and consular properties and personnel.

As recent events have demonstrated, when it comes to human rights it is not enough merely to keep your own house in order. As a conscientious member of the international community, Estonia feels the responsibility to do more globally. That includes paying attention to human rights violations in places torn by conflict, as well as doing more to stop and prevent the violation of the rights of women and the child. It also means making the most of new technologies in the service of fundamental rights and freedoms. The need to take responsibility and do more is also why Estonia looks forward to becoming a member of the Human Rights Council and to working proactively towards the fulfilment of its mandate.

Permit me to touch upon the developments in Syria. We have witnessed the complete breakdown of any semblance of the rule of law. We continue to see extensive human rights and international humanitarian law abuses. It appears that both sides have committed serious international crimes. Yet we still see no solution. We cannot look on and wait for the violence to spread even more widely. The Security Council — especially its permanent members — must overcome their differences and find a solution to the bloodshed. The least that all parties must do is to allow for humanitarian aid to be safely delivered and to guarantee the security of humanitarian workers. Without an end to the armed conflict, without peace, there can be no political process.

But it is not only Syria that needs our attention. We should not avoid the problem of protracted conflicts that have already waited for years to be solved. We shall speak with one voice against continuing violations of the territorial integrity of sovereign States and for the secure return of all forcefully displaced persons. Moreover, more attention to conflict prevention would help to avoid such violations in the future.

A stronger commitment to conflict prevention and to the enhancement of the rule of law can help to avoid violent conflicts and the most heinous international crimes. Under the principle of the responsibility to protect, States committed in 2005 to protect their people from ethnic cleansing, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Today the content of the responsibility to protect is not debated. The difficulty, however, lies with its application: when Governments do not live up to their responsibility, the international community must react and act.

The international criminal justice system, especially the International Criminal Court, plays a crucial role in providing timely and decisive responses to such crimes. Investigations by the Court may deter further atrocities, prevent their escalation or accelerate their end. It is therefore essential to cooperate with the Court and apprehend those it has indicted.

As a result of the evolving nature of military conflicts, civilian casualties tragically are on the rise. Among civilians, women and children are the most vulnerable. When we take that into account, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, takes on a whole new immediacy. Furthermore, conflict-related sexual violence requires more attention. Such violence can easily lead to further war crimes and crimes against humanity. Moreover, in advancing the rights of the child, the International Criminal Court's recent decision to convict Thomas Lubanga Dyilo was a significant achievement and will, we hope, have a strong deterrent effect in the future to prevent crimes against children.

The Crimean War, in the 1850s, brought the world the first extensive photographic reports of conflicts. Today, new media make it even more difficult to hide war crimes both on and off the battlefield. Modern technology brings home the reality and horror of war. We must therefore recognize the important role of technology in advancing human rights.

Freedom of expression is a human right, whether in the city square, the press or in cyberspace. For the third year in a row, Freedom House has ranked Estonia first in the world in Internet freedom. We have joined the coalition Freedom Online, a group of States working closely together to advance human rights online. In addition, Estonia looks forward to discussing actively matters relating to Internet freedom in the Human Rights Council, which adopted a resolution on that topic this year (resolution 20/8). The resolution was a genuine milestone affirming that fundamental rights in the virtual world must be protected with the same commitment as in the real world.

Internationally, there are worrisome developments related to Internet governance. Too many countries speak about the dangers of a free Internet from a

security perspective. The truth is, as we know well, that cybersecurity is needed to prevent oppressive Governments and criminals from wreaking havoc. It is not to prevent peaceful individuals from speaking their minds or gathering information and exchanging ideas.

Despite having experienced extensive cyber attacks during the so-called Web War One, five years ago, Estonia does not support more rigid regulation and censorship in cyberspace. Estonia is committed to an open, secure and reliable Internet. It is therefore imperative to ensure that the International Telecommunication Union's new regulation does not lead to the restriction of Internet freedom and unnecessary limits to the free flow of ideas and information. In fighting cybercrimes, the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime provides the appropriate and primary legal framework at the global level.

Globally, there is a deficit of good and responsible governance. Its lack is the root cause of countless other ills. But again, some progress has been made. I was proud to represent Estonia when I signed on to the Open Government Partnership, along with representatives of 42 other countries. That multilateral initiative aims to take concrete steps to institute a new model of governance to maximize the potential of new technologies and, most important, to tackle corruption.

The information revolution we experience these days has assisted Estonia to successfully and rapidly transform itself into a rule-of-law-based democratic society. Estonia was the first country where people could cast their vote online in parliamentary and municipal elections. Just a few months ago we conducted our census for the first time to a large extent online. This year more than 90 per cent of taxpayers in Estonia filed annual income tax returns via the Internet. E-government, e-school, e-medical prescriptions and e-parking are examples of Estonian innovation in the field of citizen-friendly public services. They increase transparency and help to prevent and cut down corruption. They reduce costs. Most importantly, however, they have increased the possibility to exercise fundamental rights and freedoms and improve inclusive and responsible governance. Therefore, Estonia wishes to share its e-governance skills and to continue to facilitate exchanges with partners worldwide.

My comments on the need to do more apply to the United Nations too. Without reform, its global mission will be unsustainable. We need change, ranging from reforming the United Nations in the broadest sense to cutting the waste of paper. In an information age it is increasingly necessary to distinguish noise from signal, to distinguish genuine data from spin.

I have spoken thus far about what Governments can and must do. In our increasingly interconnected, wired and wireless world, civil society and the private sector play an ever-greater role. Governments benefit from involving non-governmental organizations, entrepreneurs and private individuals in governance. Estonia and many other countries increasingly and successfully do so. The challenge, however, is for the United Nations system — a multilateral organization based on modern, post-Westphalian States — to embrace those other actors and to involve them in finding solutions and decision-making.

Allow me to continue by sharing some thoughts related to development and responsibility.

Sustainable development is not a clichéd utopia; nor is it something forced on us from above. True development can be nothing other than sustainable. Yet we have seen unsustainability masked as development, despite the contradiction in terms.

Consider the global financial crisis. Burdening our children and grandchildren with mountains of debt is immoral, as is living at the expense of others. Growth without responsibility is illusory. We have learned that the hard way. Let us not make the same mistake again.

We are another year closer to the deadline we set ourselves for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Were they too ambitious? I do not think so. Aiming high is the least we can do. There is no point in setting targets that we can be confident of achieving effortlessly. Yet we must resist the temptation to sell everything as a success if that is not the case. Failure to achieve all the MDGs is no excuse not to set new targets. The world needs sustainable development goals. We are still in a preliminary phase of the discussion. Let us aim high and do our best.

Despite the world's best efforts, millions remain in poverty. The information technology (IT) transformation will create massive opportunities all over the world. We must, however, avoid a digital divide that would stymie this historic chance to accelerate development in all parts of the world. I was a member of Kofi Annan's high-level panel of experts on information and communication technology — already a decade ago — and I continue to be concerned about the gap between the digital haves and have-nots, especially because, by investing in IT, countries such as

mine have leapt into modernity and transparency. New information and communications technologies have the potential to trigger the next industrial revolution, but governments cannot achieve it alone.

Entrepreneurs expanding the range of global knowledge networks are key partners in fighting poverty and creating a more transparent economy. They can also make an outsized difference in their communities and the world. However, Governments must provide a secure and fruitful environment for those sorts of ideas to emerge and prosper. Twenty-one years after restoring our independence, Estonia is an example where a combination of responsible free enterprise, e-governance, international partnerships and eco-friendly policies can put a country in the fast lane of development.

Experience shows that if we fail to act responsibly, we will, in the end, be forced to do so. Let us begin by acting responsibly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Banda: Allow me to congratulate the President on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. My delegation and I would like to assure him of Malawi's full support during his tenure of office.

It is an honour to address the Assembly today for the first time in my capacity as President of the Republic of Malawi. As the Assembly may be aware, I took office in April of this year after the death of my predecessor, His Excellency Professor Bingu Wa Mutharika. On behalf of all Malawians, I express our appreciation for the support that the world gave us during that difficult time in our country. I would like to also acknowledge in particular the support I received from leaders from the Southern African Development Community and the entire African continent when I assumed the presidency. The support that I received is a mark that Africa has indeed embraced women's leadership.

Joining the world's leaders here and becoming only the second female Head of State in Africa's history, after Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, is a moment of pride for me. However, mine is not the story of the success of an individual, but of a people. A peaceful and constitutional transition of power was not inevitable when my presidency began. It is the courage and determination of the people of Malawi that made it possible. The people of Malawi have made a decisive choice. They have chosen democracy, they have chosen peace and they have chosen to work together to realize their destiny. It is my people's courage and determination that has taken me to the presidency, and which we will now apply to our national development.

The theme of the general debate this year is "Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means". It allows us to reflect on some of the conflict situations around the world, including in Africa. Those conflicts have a devastating effect on the lives of millions, especially women and children. The impact of conflict goes beyond the people directly involved, affecting the region and the world. Let me agree with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon when he said in his reappointment speech that one of the greatest opportunities we have for a better world without conflict is through sustainable development.

The biggest threats to security and peace are poverty, lack of opportunity and lack of hope. It is unacceptable to me as the President of Malawi, as it should be to the global community, that we have children continuing to suffer from malnutrition, or that they yearn to learn but have to sit under trees rather than in proper classrooms. It is unacceptable that a mother should die while giving birth because the nearest health centre is far away, or that thousands die of diseases that we have answers for. It is unacceptable that the youth who represent the future of our world have few opportunities to realize

their potential, or that they are not guaranteed a society where they can speak their mind. It is unacceptable that farmers and other workers continue to toil to make the best of what they have, but do not enjoy the fruits of their labour due to lack of modernization, a supportive policy environment and access to markets; and that they are buried under global tariffs and taxes. It is when those frustrations are in place that conflict takes root.

For decades, I have fought these issues in Malawi as a social justice and human rights activist and through my work at the gra-ssroots. I have experienced the struggles of the poor and the suffering of Malawian women. I have championed the advancement of the oppressed and marginalized, fought for the rights of women and children, campaigned for the betterment of the rural and urban poor. I can attest to the fact that the experience of a poor and disadvantaged Malawian is intimately intertwined with that of Africans, and indeed with that of the people of the least developed countries.

Now, as the President of the Republic of Malawi, I have a vision. My vision is to eradicate poverty through economic growth and wealth creation. Malawi aims to create wealth by transforming the structure of the economy, promoting the private sector in order to achieve economic growth, accelerating job creation and protecting the vulnerable and the excluded within a decentralized and democratic environment.

Specifically, my vision is to transform Malawi into one of the fastest-growing African economies in the next decade. For me, growth is not merely related to gross domestic product. Growth is about wealth and prosperity for all, opportunity for all, happiness for all, political and economic freedom for all. Growth is also about growing the number of children in school and young people in jobs. Growth is about increasing the number of mothers who give safe birth in a hospital and of growing the number of families who have plenty of food.

As the Assembly may be aware, for the past three years Malawi has faced severe economic and social challenges brought on by poor political and economic governance, which could have impacted our ability to accelerate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore, upon assuming office I immediately put in place an economic recovery programme to restore macroeconomic stability in the country so that we can not only address our immediate macroeconomic issues, but also secure Malawi's ability to meet the MDG targets.

I would like to share that we are certain that we will be able to achieve five of the eight MDGs by 2015. And we will continue to strive to achieve our goals of the three remaining MDGs: universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, and improving maternal health. Coincidentally, these three MDGs are related to issues that I have worked on throughout my life, and I will personally ensure that Malawi redoubles its efforts to make improvements in those areas.

My Government realizes that the potential of Malawi — the potential of our land, our resources and, most importantly, our people — is great. But that opportunity will be seized only through our own efforts. That is why my vision is not just hopeful words. Our willingness to take tough decisions does not end here. Our plans need to be translated into action. To that end, within my first 100 days in office, Malawi held an inclusive national dialogue on the economy to narrow down five priority sectors within our medium-term national development framework, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II. The five priorities are energy, tourism, agriculture, mining and infrastructure development.

Central to those priorities is our emphasis on delivery through partnership with the private sector. We will facilitate that by making changes aimed at improving the business climate. My Cabinet has identified three specific projects within each priority sector and translated that into an implementation plan for the next two years. The projects range from the completion of essential roads and rail lines, to setting up alternative energy sources and undertaking business climate reform to attract investment into agro-processing and mining. The projects will set our country on a path of fulfilling its full potential.

In addition, I have also launched two initiatives — the Presidential Initiative on Maternal Health and Safe Motherhood, and the Presidential Initiative on Poverty and Hunger Reduction — to fast-track the interventions needed to address the social needs of disadvantaged groups, especially women and youth.

Malawi refuses to accept what others may consider to be our destiny — the status of underdevelopment. Malawi is committed to change that perception. But in so doing, my Government and, indeed, the people of

Malawi know that we need to engage the rest of the global community. That is why, within days of taking office, I reopened dialogue and engagement with our neighbours, with African leaders and with the rest of the world. The people of Malawi are grateful for the good will that many have shown us, and we are encouraged by the support of our partners.

Malawi will continue to need global support in the short and medium terms. We need this support to protect the rural poor from food shortages caused by prolonged dry spells in some parts of the country. Malawi is looking for partnerships to build its energy capacity. Malawi needs support to attract private investment for the rich potential we have in agro-processing and mining, among others. We are looking for partnerships to support the development of our transport and communications infrastructure in order to improve access to markets.

Before I conclude I wish to draw the Assembly's attention to the following three issues that have a bearing on most of the least developed countries. First, I call upon the General Assembly to ensure that the Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted in Turkey in May 2011, will be implemented in their entirety in an effective and timely manner. In particular, duty-free and quota-free market access and supply-side capacity must be ensured to the least developed countries.

Secondly, most least developed countries are facing the adverse effects of climate change, which is causing flooding, land degradation and drought. In that regard, Malawi welcomes the recent outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Brazil, where international consensus emerged and agreement was reached on important areas of sustainable development. The implementation of these agreements is very crucial for our future.

Finally, on the issue of the reform of the United Nations, Malawi fully supports the expansion of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories. As members of the Assembly are aware, Africa represents one of the single largest regions within the United Nations, and a very significant proportion of issues discussed in the Security Council concern the African continent. It is for those reasons, therefore, that Malawi joins the rest of the African nations in demanding at least two seats in the permanent category and five seats in the non-permanent category, as stipulated in the Ezulwini Consensus. Africa has to lead its own development, and that will be a step in ensuring that it can.

At this moment, I say to the Assembly that Malawi is on a journey – a journey to change its trajectory; a journey to make real change happen; a journey to foster private-sector growth; a journey to be an integral part of the global community. Malawi is ready to take its turn to grow, not just in wealth, but in opportunities, hopes and freedoms for all of the Malawian people. As a new President and a new member of the global community of leaders, I ask for the Assembly's support as this one African country journeys to realize its full potential — for its people, for Africa and for the world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Joyce Hilda Mtila Banda, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.